

## **West Virginia Master Naturalist SUGGESTIONS FOR INSTRUCTORS**

**Subject** (see Class Description & Outline): \_\_\_\_\_

**Date and time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approximate no. of students expected:** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to instruct a West Virginia Master Naturalist class! Recognizing that not all of our instructors are experienced teachers, we offer some suggestions to make your effort easier and more effective. If you have handouts you want photocopied, equipment needs, etc., let us know at least a week in advance.

Who is your audience? It varies of course, but you will probably be working with a diverse group in terms of age, experience, and abilities. They have a genuine love of nature, but most will have little or no background in natural sciences. On the other hand, your group may well include professionals and serious amateurs that have a deep and perhaps narrow knowledge of some area of biology, geology, or related field. They all have enrolled to broaden their knowledge of plants, animals, geology, weather, ecology, etc., and expect to use what they learn in volunteer conservation and education projects.

1. Assess the physical abilities of your class members, and don't encourage them to overexert themselves in the field. Avoid taking them into dangerous situations.
2. On hikes and field trips, count heads before you leave and when you finish to make sure you didn't lose anyone.
3. Understand that your very limited class time will never be enough, and think about what few things you want your students to retain.
4. Avoid technical jargon, unless you think these words are in common enough use that students should learn them.
5. Anything taught out-of-doors is absorbed and retained better.
6. Involving more senses than just looking and listening makes learning easier.
7. Answering questions from your students should be a top priority, not a last-thing-if-time-allows.
8. In a classroom situation, allow participants a short break in each hour to at least stand up and stretch. If possible, break 3- and 4-hour classes into two parts separated by some other class or activity.
9. Focus on West Virginia natural history, drawing your examples and illustrations from our state, if possible, rather than Arizona or Africa or Samoa.
10. Avoid presenting your personal environmental, political, or religious views.
11. Start and end your class on time; if participants want to stay later with questions, that is fine.
12. We ask that you try to cover at least what is listed in the "Expected Outcomes" in the Class Description.